

Ellen Dahl wins \$30,000 National Photography Prize at Murray Art Museum Albury

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By Mark Westall

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Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA) has announced Ellen Dahl as the winner of the \$30,000 National Photography Prize for 2024 and unveiled the finalists' exhibition, open until 1st September 2024.



Ellen Dahl, Winner, National Photography Prize 2024, Murray Art Museum Albury. Photography by Jeremy Weihrauch. Artwork: Ellen Dahl, Four Days Before Winter, installation view, National Photography Prize 2024, Murray Art Museum Albury.

The series 'Four Days Before Winter' brings together multiple aspects of concerns and ideas within my practice; exploring the expanded photographic field to extract a sense of place and affect, geological imagination, time, and how to assemble ecological meaning in the time of climate change. The final work presented in the National Photography Prize is a reflection of all this, and I consider my process a three-way collaboration between the site of Svalbard (and what it chose to reveal right at the cusp of winter), the camera optics and the artist. For 'Four Days Before Winter' to be acknowledged in this way by judge Nici Cumpston, amongst such an incredible cohort, within a highly respected photographic prize – one that considers a body of work rather than just a single image – feels incredible and humbling.

Ellen Dahl, 2024 National Photography Prize Winner

Selected from 12 finalists by judge Nici Cumpston OAM, Ellen Dahl's winning work *Four Days Before Winter* is part of the ongoing project *Field Notes from the Edge* exploring the peripheral Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard – the fastest warming place on earth. The four-part work presents close up details of collapsing terrain due to melting permafrost as a result of ongoing coal mining in the region. The series not only brings into question the devastating effects of climate change, but also considers photography's intrinsic involvement in how we see and feel about the world around us. Originally from arctic Norway, Ellen Dahl now lives on Gadigal Land, Sydney.

Established in 1983, the National Photography Prize is Australia's longest-running acquisitive photographic award and offers a unique opportunity to consider the vital role of photography in contemporary art in Australia. The biennial award showcases the work of leading and emerging artists from across the country who are pushing the boundaries of the photographic medium, and challenging existing languages and techniques.



Olga Svyatova, Winner, John and Margaret Baker Fellowship, National Photography Prize 2024, Murray Art Museum Albury. Photography by Jeremy Weihrauch. Artwork: Olga Svyatova, They/???, 2022 – ongoing, inkjet print on paper, installation view, National Photography Prize 2024, Murray Art Museum Albury.

The \$5000 John and Margaret Baker Fellowship has been awarded to Olga Svyatova for their work *???*/They, an ongoing photographic project that explores multiple connections between time, relationships, and archival images. Svyatova appropriates their own personal experience of differing cultures and histories to invite reflections on the intricate connections that sustain our lives across time and space.

Selected by an expert panel comprising Nanette Orly, Senior Curator, Murray Art Museum Albury, Bala Starr, Director, La Trobe Art Institute, Bendigo, and Tiyan Baker, 2022 National Photography Prize Winner, the 2024 National Photography Prize finalists include Australian artists and collectives; Alex Walker & Daniel O'Toole, Ali McCann, Ali Tahayori, Ellen Dahl, Ioulia Panoutsopoulos, Izabela Pluta, Kai Wasikowski, Nathan Beard, Olga Svyatova, Rebecca McCauley & Aaron Claringbold, Sammy Hawker, and Skye Wagner.

The finalists' works touch on themes of the environment and its degradation, cultural and familial histories, and connection to time and place. Developed in close consultation with the MAMA curatorial team, they span large-scale installations, collages and assemblages, archival and chemical processes, to more intimate and personal moments.

The National Photography Prize brings together some of the most outstanding contemporary artists working with photography in Australia, and the calibre of this year's prize continues to raise the bar. The Prize is one of the foundations of our renowned contemporary photography collection, and we are proud to present a platform that supports both established and emerging artists, recognising the achievements of artists today as well as investing in the future of experimental photographic practice.

Blair French, MAMA CEO

Previous National Photography Prize recipients include Tiyan Baker (2022), Debra Phillips (2020) and Amanda Williams (2018), and John and Margaret Baker Fellowship recipients include Sara Oscar (2022), Hayley Millar Baker (2020), and Ioulia Panoutsopoulos (2018).

The National Photography Prize is generously supported by the **MAMA Art Foundation**.

2024 National Photography Prize, Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA) 23rd March – 1st September 2024 mamalbury.com.au

About

Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA) is a vibrant contemporary art museum in regional New South Wales. After undergoing a major redevelopment in 2015, the museum reopened with an emboldened vision to create a cultural destination in the heart of the Murray, on Wiradjuri Country. Underlying this vision is a belief that art and artists have the power to inspire, challenge and strengthen the community.

The Museum is contemporary and experimental, an attitude that developed long before the redevelopment, both out of a desire to explore new ideas and a need to be resourceful. The resulting program is a mix of self-curated exhibitions alongside

partnership exhibitions from state and national museums and galleries. The permanent collection has a strong focus on photography, developed through acquisitions from the biennial National Photography Prize.

The collection contains almost 3000 items including works by significant Australian artists.

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